

The CanChild Knowledge Translation (KT) Science Working Group collaborated with Matter of Focus and 5 CanChild research teams to learn an approach to assessing our research impact. This report highlights the benefits, challenges, and usefulness of using Matter of Focus and OutNav reported by two focus groups of workshop participants (n = 6).

KT Science Working Group Impact Report

Project Level

- **Systematic process** to understand impact
- **Grant support:** can be used for writing the KT aspect of a grant application
- **Organizational tool:** OutNav can be used to organize large volumes of data + visualize progress
- **Allowed teams to reflect on their work:** "We did end up actually adding or considered adding, both a time point, as well as other information in order to improve the actual study design..."
- **Let teams assess different kinds of evidence**
- **Helped teams examine how their work makes knowledge users feel,** which was recognized an important component of effective KT as it can motivate behaviour change

Benefits

Organizational Level

- **Gave the 'traction' needed to conceptualize impact:** "It aligned with what we wanted to do, we just didn't have the structure for that, until it came in, so it was a little like mirage in the desert for us. It really was something that was helpful to get us out of those weeds."
- **Allowed groups to focus on the small steps instead of the big picture:** "It just gave us that little thing we could focus on to move forward, as opposed to trying to conceptualize the big components."
- **Provided the ability to move things around easily:** "I mean this is the thing that I think you could do with sticky notes and move around on a board and all that, but to connect people virtually no, I think that would have been really difficult."

Challenges

- **Lack of capacity** (personnel, funds): "I think OutNav can be a bit costly for some, and smaller-scale organizations may be able to handle that data collection using other tools."
- **Too much data for existing multi-year projects to manage:** "I think this is an issue which several teams might have—it's just our person power...you almost need another person to be able to do OutNav because there's just so much evidence—and having so much evidence is like the happiest problem to have, it's not a bad problem...this would have been so immensely helpful, if we were at the beginning of the [project name], beginning to plan, beginning to track."
- **Vastness of the project** was overwhelming and unmanageable: "Our task was a really daunting task to measure CanChild's research impact."
- **Learning to use - easy for some, not for others:** "I think it is helpful for certain people, I don't know that everyone would benefit from that, though."
- **Time intensive:** "We did spend a lot of time and it was like multiple people spending hours on end to do some of this work".
- **Next steps unclear:** "We're at odds with the conceptual process, and then the actual how do we do this. Like the practical component of it...we've seen the benefits of the conceptual process and now it almost felt like a natural stopping point for us...to stop with the concept component and not follow it through to do the sources."

Project Level

Usefulness

Organizational Level

- **Plan projects:** "We want to use this approach in developing research projects, so it guides our KT outcomes from the beginning. Set up more systematic ways of evaluating research impact that do not solely rely on using quantitative numbers to show change."
- **Collect the right information:** "Thinking about the areas where we're not collecting information was really useful and, what can we start to collect on an ongoing basis that would help us have a better understanding of the impact that we're having."
- **Writing grants and planning KT:** "I plan to use the pathways in future grants as part of the KT plan. I also plan to use the approach to verify my thought process when engaging in a KT activities."
- **Visualization:** "I think being able to see across the board what other teams were doing throughout the process could have been quite illuminating because there isn't necessarily a right approach or wrong approach to doing it but maybe we would have formulated how we got to our endpoint differently."

- **Time intensive:** "We did have this kind of truncated workshop approach, because we only did the conceptual workshops ... you really only get what you put in. We didn't put in the money to the practical side."
- **Costly:** "I don't see a perfect solution to how we can do this going forward that isn't hugely costly in terms of both time and money."
- **Nice, but not required:** "I think we could have done it without OutNav...I don't know that the software added a whole lot extra for us, and I think our big learning happened within the MIRO board and the workshops. I think we could have taken that forward on our own. I think it definitely sped up the process, but I don't think it was absolutely necessary."
- **Next steps unclear:** "Pushed us to move from the sorting to some actions but...even at this point, we're still having a hard time seeing where OutNav can help in terms of where we go with the next steps like collecting data, analyzing data after everything is set up as a process of our impact evaluation..."
 - **"Our initial investment was 100% worth it. That was money well spent"**

Recommendations

1

Inclusion of non-traditional research impact metrics (e.g., email messages from knowledge users) is important and should be incorporated when assessing research impact.

2

There is a need for increased collaborative practices and knowledge sharing within the organization (e.g., space to learn about different research teams' impact practices).

3

A cost-benefit analysis would help determine if the use of this program would be worthwhile for CanChild going forward.

4

The best use of Matter of Focus and OutNav is to start impact tracking at the outset of each new project to avoid being overwhelmed with data, and to build an impact story over time.

5

There is a need for greater capacity (i.e., financial, personnel) to conduct ongoing assessments at the project and organizational levels.

6

It would be helpful to look into similar platforms to see if they would be a better fit going forward from an organizational perspective.

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